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## WOMAN'S PART IN PUBLIC-SCHOOL EDUCATION

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The thought of the day seems to be that a child shall be educated in a way that will enable him to live a worthy life; that less stress shall be placed upon the development of his intellectual powers, and more upon his qualities of character; that the school life shall be a continuation and enlargement upon the true home life, and not a training separate and apart.

In the light of these views, the question of "Woman's Part in Public-School Education" is of more than ordinary interest and deserves the thoughtful consideration of every one who is interested in school affairs. The work that woman has done, and the success that has obtained along humane, philanthropic, and educational lines, in the past twenty-five years, indicate that she has a sympathy and patience with children, and an understanding of them, that fit her to take an important part in public-school education.

I believe that woman has a part in public education because she possesses certain natural qualities peculiar to her sex, that are essential elements in the rounded up education of a boy or girl.

I shall not take your time to discuss the political or legal right of woman to a part in public education, but desire simply to call your attention to the moral duty and inherent right of woman to live out her own individuality and up to the best talent within her. Because of this, woman finds her work where children's interests are.

It is not a trade or a business that woman has learned. It is the intuitive insight into child-life and child-nature that God Almighty has given her. Woman knows a hundred ways to reach a child. It may be through his pride, his reason, his intellect or his affection, or by means of her individual tact; but whatever method is used, there are always back of it the patience and interest of woman in youth. And so, wherever children are concerned, wherever their safeguards or development are involved, the woman view-point should have expression. It is not only in a general and abstract way that woman

should enter into the public education of our youth, but in a material and practical way.

Woman has a part in public education as a student, as a teacher, as a patron, and as a member of boards of education. Woman's love and understanding of children are a natural instinct that exists in the most primitive and ignorant woman; but if we would have the larger benefits of that knowledge in our citizenship, we must educate the possessor to use it in an intelligent manner. The evolution of woman has been and is wonderful. Every year large numbers who are to be the mothers of the coming generation are filling our educational institutions. Half of our public-school population are girls, while women constitute nearly 30 per cent. of all college students.

Occasionally someone will denounce the higher education of women. Recently a woman physician said that the mental development of woman is destroying her ability to carry out her proper functions. In answer to this, let me quote Dr. J. M. Taylor, dean of Vassar College, who has made careful study of this subject:

The bearing of the higher education of women on the health of women and their attitude toward the home is of perennial interest. It has been abundantly shown, over and over again, by the most careful investigation, that the health of college women improves during the four years' college course. While that is not true in all cases, it is certainly not true in the cases of all men. Only three of 153 graduates of 1903 of Vassar did not improve in general health after entering college. The first ten years' history of Vassar shows that half the total number of graduates married, and that the proportion of children to each was from three to four. There is nothing in the college training of American women to contribute to abnormal results. A healthy mind, a natural body, and absolutely healthy and natural sentiments toward life are the general product. No work in America promises more for its future than the thorough education of its girls.

But woman's part in public-school education has its greatest manifestation, at the present time, in the large number of women teachers in the public-schools. In 1880 the percentage of women teachers was 57. In 1903 it had increased to 74, and we naturally ask why this has come about. I venture one suggestion. At one time in the history of teachers the only equipment necessary was a certificate. If an applicant before a board of examiners maintained an average of 70 per cent., he was a teacher, and nothing could prevent him, if he could delude some weak board of education into giving him a school. The time is not so far distant when physical strength was

of greater value to the schoolmaster than intellectual power. It was necessary for him to control and break the spirit of the biggest boy in his room, or else he had not been a success. Experience has taught us that this influence did not stimulate the pupil's respect for law and order, but destroyed it. But there came a change in the sentiment of the public; they began to wonder if there was not some other way to reach children. Here and there a slight little woman would succeed in a school where a strong man had been employed and failed. By moral suasion, by studying the boy, by giving her woman-nature full sway, she would capture the boy's heart, perhaps touch his pride, secure his co-operation, stimulate his gallantry—in a word, win him. Educators and the thinking public at last realized that woman's way was the best way of reaching children.

At this period moral suasion supplanted the birch whip. The sentiment of the public became so strong against physical punishment that laws prohibiting it were placed upon the statute-books of a number of states. The teacher, in preparing for his calling today, does not have to measure his professional value by his ability to administer corporal punishment. The teacher of the present, who makes a success of his work, loves it. He studies and trusts his pupils, and by that very faith wins their love and confidence. He has an understanding of and sympathy with child-life, and he has tact to manage it.

The teacher must also have the ability to discriminate. The doctor, as he goes about his practice, cannot send out a general prescription to apply to all cases; he must have the skill to discriminate. The commercial man who is a successful one must study his men; he must approach them in as many different ways as there are minds; he cannot commit a speech and repeat it to every business man he may approach; he must have the acuteness to discriminate. The nurse who goes into a sickroom fully determined to put into effect the theories she has learned, without considering whether the case is one of typhoid fever or a critical operation, will soon find out that she has mistaken her calling. She, too, must have the quality of discrimination. The teacher is no exception to the general rule. He must surpass the others in tact; he must have the ability to find out each child's individual make-up and temperament; he must discover the avenue through which he may influence him; he must reach down

and interest the child-mind; he can lift it up to his own mentality only as he leads it on, year after year. This requires a comprehension of childhood; and woman's nature fits her peculiarly to enter into a sympathetic relationship with children and to teach them properly.

But the business man complains of lack of confidence and individuality in our city-taught boys. Educators themselves are somewhat disturbed over the apparent shortcomings. Some of them give as a reason that there are too many women teachers in the city schools, and that boys, as they enter the adolescent age, need, in greater degree, masculine influences. I believe this is true; but that does not prove anything, because the average boy at that age is in high-school work and comes under the direct influence of both men and women. In substantiation of this it is a fact, interesting to note, that out of a canvass of the 60 grammar buildings in Cleveland, the average age of the graduating classes of 1905, or 3,222 grammar pupils, was found to be 14.08 years. There was only one building where the average age of the class was 15 years. In 23 buildings the average age was 13+, and in the other 36 buildings the class age average was 14+.

It is in the cities that there is complaint of a lack of individuality among pupils, but I believe this is not because there are so many women teachers, but on account of the close organization and the lack of freedom for each teacher to work out his own problems. Technical training is the foundation of a teacher's work, but it depends upon his individual interpretation and application of that training whether or not he shall succeed. I believe that it is the teacher, irrespective of sex, who goes on, year after year, surrounded by limitations and restrictions, that makes him little more than a machine to grind out so much work per day, that fails to create individuality in pupils or instil into boys any vigorous manhood.

It is, however, not only as a student and teacher that woman has a part in public education, but as a patron also. We cannot get far in advance of the people in any movement; and so, if we would secure the best equipment for our public schools, and the greatest benefits for the youth who attend them, we must keep the patrons alive to their needs.

It is the duty and mission of the school to develop a child, but the greatest work lies in bringing him into harmony with the community

interests in which he lives; and I believe this can best be done by correlating the work of the home and the school. No teacher can do this, however, unless she has the cordial interest and support of the parent. It is to be regretted that so few fathers have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the daily working conditions of the schoolroom. The average father is absent from home during the hours that the school is in session; he is usually so engrossed in the efforts of securing ways and means that the work of straightening out the "tangles" falls to the mother. This fact brings her into close touch with the teacher and the schools, and makes the mother a factor as a patron.

Realizing the benefits to their children, to be derived from this contact of mother and teacher, "mothers' clubs" exist in almost every school district in many cities. These clubs study and discuss many questions pertaining to children, and co-operate with and support the teachers in carrying out their plans for better and broader results.

In our own city of Cleveland the women are thoroughly alive to the interests of the schools. Besides mothers' clubs, there are other organizations of women that contribute to their welfare. The Needle-Work Guild, through information obtained from the principals of some of the poor districts, each fall furnishes a change of underwear, stockings, and other necessities, to needy children, so that they may come to school in a presentable and cleanly manner. The Denison Patrons' League is an organization composed of the patrons of the school. Its officers are the leading citizens of the community. The league furnishes four free entertainments or lectures each year in the auditorium of the school building to the parents of the district, at which are discussed the relationship of the home and the school. The Free Day Nursery and Kindergarten Association support four summer vacation schools, and by their interest and effort stimulate the carrying out and enlargement of the work. The Daughters of the American Revolution appropriated a sum of money the past winter and gave, in conjunction with the school authorities, a series of patriotic lectures in the school auditoriums, where the population was largely foreign. The title of the lecture was "The Story of America." It was given in simple English, and was supplemented with stereop-

tion slides and patriotic music. This work was a grand success from every standpoint. These are only a part of the numerous efforts of Cleveland women in the interest of good schools. Other cities are working along similar lines, and it will only be a matter of time when the work of woman as a patron will be considered an essential part of every successful school.

But it is equally important that woman should have representation in the administrative department of our public schools as in the educational. Far be it from me to say that all women are fitted for school-board members, or that women should be upon every board for the sake of having a woman. But I do believe that the right woman should be upon every board, whether in a large or small system, because broader results will be obtained by adding the woman viewpoint of school administration; because the right woman, when it comes to children, is unselfish and has no interests which supersede those of the child; because the interest of the teacher and patron can always have expression with a woman representative upon the administrative board.

Two of the distinctive features that mark the services of women upon school boards are their close attention to detail and their willingness to hear the patron's side of the question. The public schools are the closest to the people of all public institutions, and through the members of its school board only can the people have representation. I therefore consider this public service and close attention to detail splendid qualifications for any member of a school board, and especial qualifications for women. The public has poor service from a member of a public board who, willing to sacrifice himself for the dear public before election, after election places himself upon a pedestal and draws the "awful circle" about himself so that no one can approach him. Women members are interested in the questions of hygiene and sanitation, and especially in those questions of education which carry with them moral influences which go to make better boys and girls. The married women serving on school boards, as far as I have been able to learn are women who have had years of contact with children. The one experience that makes a mother valuable is that she has gone through that period of rearing her children, studying their natures, sympathizing with their weaknesses, and real-

izing their worth. By this time what she knows about children is not "theory," but experience; and if she is an educated, broad-minded woman, she can do much good in addition to being a fond mother and grandmother. The unmarried women who have been upon school boards are those who have dealt with children in a large way, and on account of that experience are quite as valuable.

In order that I might not discuss this part of my subject from a theoretical standpoint, I have written to prominent citizens in several cities where women are serving upon boards of education, and asked for opinions in reference to the value of their services. The answers received show that these women are not only acceptable members of their respective boards, but that they are rendering special, and almost invaluable, service to the schools because they are women. I give a few extracts.

In speaking of the woman who is a member of the board of education, the commissioner of schools at Rochester, N. Y., says:

She has made a constant contribution of suggestions and intelligent discussion equal to that of any other member; she has done more visiting than all the other members together. She has interested herself in the music, decoration, and sanitation of the schools, and has brought to these subjects an experience, good taste and special knowledge which are quite exceptional. She has been greatly interested in all that concerns the teacher, and by her remarkable gift as a public speaker she has been a force in the discussion of school questions at meetings of parents—a work of education of public sentiment which has made the progress of our schools possible through steadfast popular support. I doubt if her knowledge in the matter of selecting supplementary reading for children is surpassed by that of any other woman in the country.

Another writes as follows:

Of the two women members at Warren, Ohio, one has been for a number of years at the head of the building committee, with excellent results, and the other has been chairman of the teachers' and textbook committee. The first work they did was to renovate the schoolrooms. At the end of the first year that these women were on the board the city board of health, in making its report to the state, spoke of the splendid sanitary condition of the schoolhouses, and gave the women of the board the credit.

The member at Grand Rapids, Mich., is serving her tenth year upon the board. In these years she agitated for manual training until it was established in the grammar grades. She has been chairman of summer-school work, and it is considered a success from



every standpoint. She was a teacher, is the mother of children now in school, and is thoroughly in sympathy with the work of keeping the patron interested in the school. She is independent in her thought and action, and I should say, from the splendid commendation of her I have received, that the public of Grand Rapids feel that she is one of the most valuable members of the board.

Toledo, Ohio, boasts for the first time of a woman upon its board, and the following are extracts concerning her work :

She has brought about a better feeling between teacher and parent by giving one afternoon a week to hear the patron's side of the question. She is more earnest and conscientious than most of the members of the board, inasmuch as she has "no ax to grind." She is conscientious and independent in her action, as has been demonstrated in several instances, but always yields gracefully when defeated. She is doing fine work, and has the admiration of the board and community for her splendid poise and tact.

Cleveland has had a woman on the school board for ten years. The first one found the board renting rooms over saloons to relieve the overcrowded condition of the public schools. She protested; they insisted. She threatened to call to her aid the public press, and never since then has such a thing been proposed. These women advocated and advanced the department of kindergarten, manual training, and domestic science, and were the ardent supporters of the present day deaf school. They also did much toward abolishing the use of basement rooms.

The member who served upon the board from 1901 to 1904 was a splendid business woman, having large business interests of her own. These women, who were upon the Cleveland board from 1894 to 1904, were women of education and had had an experience with children, either as mothers or as teachers. They were conscientious and enthusiastic, and always for whatever seemed to be for the best interests of the children. So efficiently have these women served the public that I believe it to be the fixed policy of the people of my own city to keep at least one woman on the board of education.

This question of woman's part in public education is no longer unsettled. It has been demonstrated in many cities that she has a part in the administrative department as well as in the educational. It is only a matter of time when every community will realize its

importance, and when every superintendent will urge that he be given this aid. When this time comes, *one woman—the right woman*—will be a member of every board of education, whether in a large or small city.

In a little drawer in my desk is a daguerreotype picture of a woman. It is an old picture, taken perhaps in the forties. The shawl that covers the shoulders of the subject is an old-style Paisley, and the bonnet would be an heirloom today. The hair, jet-black, is parted in the middle, and is carefully smoothed upon the forehead. It is a plain face, but to me beautiful—beautiful to me because it is the face of my mother. As I sit and look at that picture, it recalls to me the influence that has come down the years and molded my life. But the devotion, the patience, the sacrifice, that shine forth from the face of that daguerreotype picture are as old as woman herself. It is this spirit of love and unselfishness that is needed everywhere today. It should permeate our commercial and business life, and should enter into the public education of every child, to the end that he may become a better citizen and a more lovable neighbor.

When this moral element shall become a permanent influence in our public schools, health will supersede discipline; the heart will lead the will; knowledge for knowledge' sake will give place to knowledge of life and its human relations; and industrial and political strife will be gradually eliminated by the brotherhood of man. For, after all, what is the purpose of education? Is this life a wager to see how much information can be accumulated and stored in the human brain; or, rather, is it a grand privilege to study and understand our relations to God, to nature, and to our fellow-man? To set a lower or a narrower standard for the public schools of our country is to deprive our youth of the best elements of good citizenship, and to lessen their opportunities for a higher life.